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Staff Box: (In order of appearance)

Leo: TEETH!!!

Jay: hnngg them

Ella: Why?

Isaiah: teeth...

Nicholas: Sexual

Helena: Can I put in a staffbox answer?

Shanti: More

Casper: Crunchy

Ronan: teef

Front Cover: Shanti Franzoni

Back Cover: Isaiah Woods

Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in any format (no PDFs please) by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to omen@hampshire.edu, the Omen Office, Leo's mailbox (1593), or Jay's mailbox (0370).

Policy

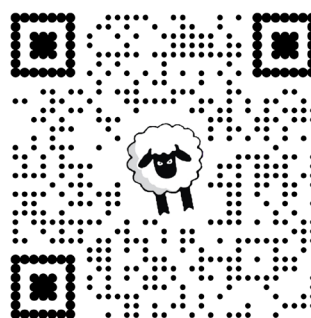
The Omen is an every-other-week-ly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous. Send us your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fan fiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited, and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish.

Your submission must include the name you use around campus: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. (Note: Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.)

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which usually takes place on alternate Friday nights in the basement of Merrill in the company of a computer with an extremely inadequate monitor. You should come. We don't bite. You can find the Omen every other Monday in Saga, the post office, online at <http://expelallo.men>, and just about any other place we can find to put it.

Find all issues here!

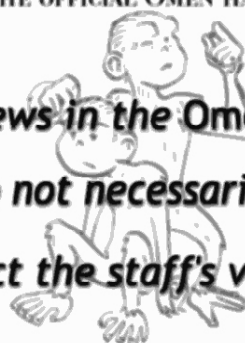


THE OFFICIAL OMEN HAIKU:

Views in the Omen (5)

Do not necessarily (7)

Reflect the staff's views (5)



EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL

by Leo Zhang and Jay Poggi

Hey, everyone. Before you dive into this issue, we'd like to address some recent events. Two weeks ago, in The Omen Volume 56 Issue 4, we published a submission titled, "A Weird Experience I had Talking About Disability on Campus." After the publication of this article, several students responded to it on social media with sentiments ranging from concern, to anger, to perhaps disgust. We feel like it's our responsibility to use this editorial to unpack what happened and where we can go from here.

We have to admit that this editorial was really hard to make. We were originally going to publish The NEMO, a satirical issue of The Omen, for April Fool's Day, but decided instead to use The NEMO's four-page space to write something addressing the responses we've seen. Pretty quickly, we heard from others that to publish an editorial on its own with no other content probably wouldn't be a good idea, and after some debate about pros and cons, we agreed. On top of trying to decide how to present this message, we struggled a lot in writing it, too—what to include, what to say, how to say it. We got help from peers, asked staff members for their opinions, and spent a lot of time poring over the Google Doc containing our drafts. We want to be completely honest about that: figuring out how we should write this, and if we should write it at all, was difficult. Frankly, we still don't really know if what we're saying and doing is "too much," or "not enough," or altogether "wrong," but we wanted to try.

We also want to make it known that both of us (Jay and Leo) are friends and co-signers with the author of the article. As a result, our feelings are tinted by the personal stake we have in the matter. Disclosing this friendship is important to provide a better, transparent sense of where we're writing from. We also feel that being friends with the author gives us insight into their intent with the piece. However, we want to stress that we would feel compelled to write this sort of editorial regardless of our relationship with the author. Some might see our policy of publishing anything and everything that's signed and legal as an indication that The Omen is some sort of "neutral" entity, a messenger with no stake in the content it delivers. That's not how we see it. True neutrality is a fallacy. So, since it can't be neutral, we see The Omen's purpose as facilitating healthy, honest, and just communication among the Hampshire community. Consider this editorial our genuine, messy attempt to deliver on that purpose. In "A Weird Experience I had Talking About Disability on Campus," the author recounted a difficult experience they'd had discussing disability in class. As we understand, they hoped to contribute to such discussions on campus through unpacking this experience. Whether or not we agree with the exact ideas expressed in the piece, we think that's an admirable goal. At the same time, we have to acknowledge how aspects of the piece (such as its use of the word "cure" and its unsympathetic ending) made certain readers feel misunderstood, ignored, or even targeted. It's clear to us that the author never intended to hurt people with their writing, and it's just as clear that people were hurt nonetheless. We want to keep both these ideas in mind as we move forward, and show equal compassion toward the author and the readers.

When someone publishes a piece of writing in The Omen, they open themselves up to scrutiny by the community. No one can satisfy every reader with their writing, nor should they. For last issue's piece on disability in particular, we anticipated criticism, as did the author. However, we feel like most of the

reactions posted on social media after the article was published were not criticism. We saw several individuals make dismissive jokes at the submission's expense, distort the submissions's message, and even attack the author personally. This backlash failed to contribute to anyone's understanding of the submission, how it caused harm, and how such harm could be mitigated. Instead, these sorts of responses excluded the author and their experience from the conversation, and in some cases directed hate toward the author. We felt especially concerned because, as they mentioned in their article, the author has an anxiety disorder. If we're going to be point-blank honest here, it was hard to watch.

So if these responses weren't helpful, what kind of response would be? Honestly, we aren't sure. We don't want to pretend like we know exactly how these sorts of conversations should go, what readers should say when they've been harmed, or what writers should say when they've caused harm. What we do know is that disability is a topic that needs to be talked about, that those impacted by the submission should be heard, and that the author's experience deserves to be considered despite the flawed manner in which it was presented. We hope a discussion can come from this, one where everyone leaves feeling understood.

We realize that's a pretty lofty goal. Having these discussions can be painful and exhausting, and we don't want anyone to burn themselves out engaging in discourse that's so personally relevant to them. The health and wellbeing of all parties surrounding The Omen is a priority for us as editors, and while we can't control what people submit or how they respond, we want to ask that everyone use The Omen as a platform to share their experiences, express their opinions, and kickstart a healthy conversation. So we encourage folks to approach this topic with sensitivity and vulnerability, to extend the same compassion toward the author as you would like them to extend it to you; especially in regard to a topic like disability, where so many people have such different experiences.

Our community is a pretty small one. Word gets around fast, and oftentimes it feels like everyone knows everyone. So, we think, it's worth having these conversations, even if they're hard. It's something worth striving toward.

If you've read this far, thank you. We took a pretty big risk writing this as opposed to our usual buffoonery. We hope it resonated with you. As you can probably tell, we care an embarrassing amount about The Omen and its role on campus. As reckless as its premise might seem, and as turbulent as its history has been, we believe this old rag has the potential to be a vehicle for good at this profoundly messed up school. We hope we can count on you all to help The Omen reach that potential. To that end, we implore you to keep writing. We don't want any discussion, be it about disability or any other subject, to be shoved in a box and forgotten—we *want* this kind of discourse. It's what The Omen is for. As you can see in this issue, we already have some submissions discussing this topic, and we want to emphasize that you are always free to submit opinion pieces, whether about this topic or another. We only ask that, when expressing disagreement, you criticize ideas, not people. 🐑

SECTION SPEAK



The graphic is divided into four colored sections: a green top-left section with a sunburst pattern, a purple top-right section with a leaf pattern, a yellow bottom-left section with a speech bubble, and a blue bottom-right section. It includes various icons like a paintbrush, a hand pointing, a sheep, and a head with pencils.

**ORIENTATION
LOGO
CONTEST**

Hampshire is unique in its history, values, curriculum, and community culture.

One orientation theme for Fall 2022 is

How to Hampshire

using our College name as a verb to indicate that living, navigating, and growing in this environment is an experience that collectively shapes, impacts, and bonds us. Other keywords to describe our community: collaborative, transdisciplinary, activists, innovative, creative, authentic, hopeful

Based on the above, get creative and turn in a winning design for the Fall 2022 New and Transfer Student Orientation Program. The Dean of Students Office will send this design out to the incoming class of Fall 2022 to vote on the designs submitted. The design with the highest number of votes will be selected as the winning design. This design will be used in a variety of items for the Fall 2022 New and Transfer Student Orientation Program

The student with the winning design will receive bragging rights and \$100 stipend. The deadline is 12 noon, Friday, April 22. Please send submissions to deanofstudents@hampshire.edu

An Ableist Omen Submission I Read On Campus

By Shanti Franzoni

In the last Omen that was published (Volume 46 Issue 4), there was an entry from Nicholas Utakis-Smith titled *A Weird Experience I Had Talking About Disability on Campus*. At first glance I assumed that it would be an article about ableism on campus and how Nicholas was perhaps affected, or simply a revelation that they had. I quickly learned that it was not that. In fact, the only expectation of mine that it did meet was alerting me to ableism on campus.

There are several small disclaimers I have to make. The first of which being that while I'm not friends with Nicholas we are in two clubs together, The Omen and Making Myths Living Legends, and get along fairly well. They also helped DM deathfest so we've spent a fair amount of time together. The only reason I bring this up is because how I address them is obviously influenced by the fact that I know them, and I'm hoping their reception to what I have to say will be helped by the fact that they know me.

But personal stuff aside, let me also disclose my disabilities: I am autistic. I have adhd. I also have anxiety (omg twinsies). Regardless, all of my disabilities are mental. I won't pretend to know what it's like to have a physical disability which does make me hesitant to write this. So I will be trying to speak only on what I know. I can't and won't make the promise that what I will say will be perfect. If I say anything wrong please feel free to write back through here or message me on instagram: @daddy.rene.descartes (embarrassing I know).

My final "disclaimer" is that people very often get incredibly defensive when accused of things such as ableism, racism, homophobia etc. And instead of asking themselves why someone came to that conclusion they instead take it as a sign of moral condemnation, and feel the need to try and quell their bruised ego. The truth is that our society is deeply ableist and because of this the default for us is often to be ableist. That doesn't make it okay but what I'm trying to get at is that this isn't me pointing a finger and saying "OOOHH LOOK AT THAT BAD PERSON," this is me trying to ask Nicholas and those who agree with them to challenge their own beliefs and understanding of disability. And I'm doing so in a public space because they published their opinion publicly.

My first, smaller critique with what the piece said is in regards to Nicholas' apparent confusion over people talking about disabled communities. I'm not sure how to be nice about this but just because you personally don't know any or aren't involved in any doesn't mean they don't exist. There are online communities that offer emotional support and tips to each other, where people know each other and are able to help one another. There are also in person communities and subcultures. The most apparent that comes to mind is Deaf culture/community. I am not d/Deaf so I won't try to explain it but here's an article to read about it:

<https://www.hearinglikeme.com/deaf-community-and-deaf-culture/>

Okay now getting into it: The primary issue I had with the piece comes from Nicholas' portrayal and understanding of the social model of disability. They said:

"One thing that makes me super uncomfortable about disability discourse in general is how much of it is focused on the social aspect. Sure, some forms of neurodivergence, I've heard, are only a hindrance in spaces built for neurotypical people, or neurodivergent people without that specific condition."

The fact that Nicholas can only see how the social model can only explain how society affects

people with Certain forms of neurodivergence tells me that they likely don't know much about the social model. So let me try to explain it for them and anyone who happens to read this:

While yes there is most definitely a physical reality to disabilities (no one is denying this), the physical aspect is rarely the most disabling part of a disability. The truth is that our world was built (literally) for a very specific type of person, a person without disabilities, an able bodied person who doesn't need any accommodations in our present society because society is already completely accommodating to them. What does this mean? Here's a simple thought experiment:

Imagine one person who has wings and can fly existing within our society. They can walk like everyone else so for the most part their wings are not particularly disabling. But what would happen if we reversed the situation and made it so that everyone in a society could fly except for one? At least some buildings would be inaccessible by foot because it's assumed that everyone can fly, so why wouldn't they build exclusively for the flying majority. In this case the person with no wings is disabled. Society wasn't built for them. However we know because of the existence of our present society that a world that can accommodate people who can't fly is more than possible. Despite having nothing inherently disabling going on with them, society has created itself in a way that is disabling to this person.

This is what disabled activists ask us to consider when thinking about the social model of disability. Why would we ask individuals to change in ways that are often dangerous, expensive, mentally taxing and what have you when we can change our society to be more accessible to everyone. This quote from a deaf tikoker (@themotherebirdie) comes to mind:

Recently I was having a conversation with my therapist, who is a hearing person, and I was expressing my frustration about how many artistic spaces are not accessible to me. And her first instinct was to ask if I wore hearing aids. And I said "Nope, ears bald." And then she asked if I've ever considered a cochlear implant. Which if you're unfamiliar is a pretty serious surgery. And I had to stop her. Because when hearing people and able-bodied people are faced with the reality of the inaccessible world that they have helped to create, their first instinct is always to try and fix the Deaf of disabled person. I am not broken. My ears are not broken. My body is not broken just because it doesn't function the same way yours does. We are only disabled because you have told us we are disabled. We are only disabled because you build a world for *you*. Not for us. Why should I have to change myself? When we can simply change the world.

And beyond whether or not we can or should ask disabled people to change, some disabilities can not be "fixed." My own personal example is autism. While there are certain things about having autism that are not made hard by society but rather just by the way my brain works (sensory issues), I wouldn't "cure" my autism for anything. Even if it was possible. But regardless if autism could be gotten rid of (it can't), this doesn't stop non-autistic people from trying to get us to stop acting autistic. Because autism is widely considered to be an inconvenience to even life ruining for our loved ones, instead of people trying to accommodate for us, they instead ask us to change everything about who we are through a kind of "therapy" known as ABA. This is incredibly mentally taxing and depressing for autistic people. But I can receive accommodations. For example I wear headphones to drown out loud noise, and sunglasses indoors for the bright lights, both of which are considered to be rude. However many people would rather try to teach me to simply suffer, or try to "cure" me than to allow me accommodations. The simple truth is that there is no kind of "getting rid" of autism that isn't about making our lives harder instead of giving us accommodations. So of course we focus on society for accommodations instead of just spending all our time daydreaming about a magical world in which we could make ourselves not autistic.

But this doesn't just apply to neurodivergence. The default for dealing with disability should be to accommodate for them rather than asking a person to change. For example adding ramps, buttons that open doors, and elevators are accommodations that not only help disabled people but able bodied people as well (not that something should have to help the able bodied for it to be considered). Society accommodating for disabled people does not and should not only apply to neurodivergency. Based on the piece's phrasing I believe this was a situation of simply not knowing, to which of course I say a google search is always helpful, but I understand that sometimes you don't have the language to even ask these kinds of questions.

However this wasn't Nicholas' main complaint. They were saying that people were suggesting that to seek treatment for a disability is morally wrong. I do not know what happened in their class so I'm taking their word for it. To be clear, I do not believe that seeking treatment for a disability is morally wrong by any stretch of the imagination. I'm glad Nicholas got their lazy eye treated through visual therapy. But the fact that that was an available treatment was in many ways society accommodating for them, and something they were likely able to get because of societal factors. Mainly that 1) this is a therapy that was available to them location wise or they had the recourses to travel to go to an optometrists office, and 2) they either had the money to pay for it or their insurance was able to cover it. Regardless they managed to overcome potential societal barriers. But had they lived in an area that didn't offer the therapy and they couldn't commute and they couldn't pay for it or insurance couldn't cover it, then they would still be disabled. And at that point society has contributed to their disability by making any kind of treatment impossible or highly difficult. Getting treatment for a lazy eye, or getting knee surgery to walk or getting a cochlear implant are all individual choices that can most definitely make a person's life easier. But these changes are not accessible to everyone. And to suggest that we focus on telling individual people to "fix" themselves is a cop out, and a denial of any kind of personal and social responsibility we have to make our world a better, more accessible place. Additionally, to suggest that there is too much focus on social aspects rather than the physical ones when disabled people of all kinds are constantly being told to fix/change themselves shows a large lack of knowledge of the current state of things. Outside of disabled communities the medical model is almost all that's talked about. And as I said, looking exclusively or even mostly at disability as a medical thing is largely harmful to disabled people and stops us from working towards making our society more accessible.

P.S. Here are a few TikTok creators who do great work educating on physical and mental disability. This is by no means a comprehensive list but if you want to start listening to and learning from disabled people this could be a good place to start:

@crutches_and_spice , @chamayamoody , @erikaheidewald , @themotherbirdie , @immarollwithit , @acess.umass (speaks specifically about making UMass more accessible) 🐑

Disability Is Not a Monolith

By Shannon Barnsley, Fo7

It's my understanding that there's been something of a backlash against Nicholas Utakis-Smith's article of late. While I have had a very different disability experience, I want to emphatically state that the social model of disability is not one size fits all and it does not work for everyone in the disability community. I cannot speak for other people, so I will focus mainly on my own experiences with disability, but I would advise anyone curious to seek out more voices in the disability community, and especially voices in the chronic illness, chronic pain, invisible illness, and dynamic disability communities, as those are the ones most left behind by the social model.

Looking back on it, I was chronically ill my whole life. But I didn't know it back then. As far as I knew, I was a generally healthy and abled kid until one day I wasn't. One fall day in my 2nd year at Hampshire I was walking back to Dakin from SAGA and then I just went down, like a marionette suddenly cut from its strings. I began collapsing more. I started getting chest pain, tachycardia, and crushing fatigue. My limbs would go numb. Brain fog made it hard to think or concentrate. I was hypovolemic as a used up Capri-Sun. ER trips yielded no results and plenty of ableism. Some professors were understanding, others didn't see how I could be "really sick" or "that sick" if I had no diagnosis and the doctors couldn't find anything wrong with me. Their ableism made school harder, but no amount of understanding could make my circulatory system work. I almost had to drop out. I only didn't because I started taking hormonal birth control, which worked like a miracle drug on my then undiagnosed illness. I went from nearly blacking out when I sat or stood up, collapsing multiple times a day, and having non-epileptic seizures all evening every evening to maybe a seizure a month and having a mostly functional autonomic nervous system if I paced myself, stood up slowly, and stayed hydrated. Janterm of my 3rd year, I was diagnosed with POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome).

POTS sits at the lovely cross-section of ableism and sexism, where, because it occurs primarily in women and most often in teenage girls, it is wildly under-researched, underfunded, underdiagnosed, under-taught in medical education, and played down as no big deal. There was a six year on average diagnostic delay when I was diagnosed. Last I checked it was down to four years. I survived the gauntlet of gaslighting and ableism that came with such a diagnosis with the support of the chronic illness community, which Venn diagrams with the disability community. I say "the", but there's no one disability community or chronic illness community. And that's the point: disability is not a monolith.

These communities have been my port, my lighthouse, and my lifesaver in the storm. After college, my health went downhill fast and my 20s were eaten up with a slew of new and worsening disabilities. I was diagnosed with MCAS (Mast Cell Activation Syndrome) and Hypothyroidism in 2014. I was diagnosed with hEDS (Hypermobile Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome) in 2017. And in 2021, I had a CVST (Cerebral Venous Sinus Thrombosis) resulting in a Bilateral Thalamic Infarction, which basically means my brain was, as the neurosurgeon put it, "an exploding mass of blood". I was very much not expecting a stroke the week of my 32nd birthday. I was already past my breaking point with my health before then and nothing has been easy or simple since. For the last nine months I've been in inpatient and outpatient rehab and collected about a dozen more diagnoses that all basically boil down to my brain doesn't brain well, my stamina is shot, and my arms are noodles. And while dealing with health insurance, doctors, hospital systems, and the background radiation of laypeople's ableism is really hard, just existing in my body and brain is so much harder.

So while the social model of disability is important and vital for many, the social model, at the exclusion of all else, is erasure. Full stop. It is an erasure of parts of the disability community and huge swaths of

the chronic illness community (which is one of the reasons these two communities remain a Venn diagram and not a circle within a larger circle), especially the dynamic disability, invisible illness, and chronic pain communities. These communities are well-versed in ableism. We experience ableism all the time, though it's sometimes different forms of ableism than more visibly disabled people experience, which can be better or worse, depending. We spend so god damn much of our time and energy trying to prove to doctors, let alone everyone else, that our illnesses and disabilities are real, that we really are as sick and as disabled as we say, and that [insert fad health trend here] will not actually cure us. Having to constantly argue with healthy and abled people to prove there is something wrong with us just to hear other disabled people say that there's nothing wrong with us and we're only disabled by an ableist society is utterly exhausting and invalidating.

The ableist saying "The only disability is a bad attitude" has a by now well-known retort of "But no amount of smiling has ever turned a staircase into a ramp." Similarly, while an elevator will make someone with chronic pain have less pain and more access, it will not cure their chronic pain. And, while any and all accessibility efforts and the understanding of peers, colleagues, bosses, professors, friends, family, etc improve our quality of life, sometimes we just don't want to be in pain anymore. Just as those of us with chronic fatigue just don't want to be tired anymore or those of us with chronic illness just don't want to be sick anymore. That is entirely valid and it doesn't negate the experiences of those who don't feel that way. For me, my disability pride only extends as far as being proud of what I've survived, what I've adapted to, and what I've fought tooth and nail for and against. I've had to fight ableism. But I've also had to fight my disabilities, however fraught fighting and warrior language can be with disability and illness. I am disabled and I embrace that label and terminology wholeheartedly. I'm never going to hide that to make anyone else comfortable or to maintain someone's ableist worldview, but I'm also never going to wrap my disabilities up in a neat little bow and gloss over all they've cost me and all I've had to endure just to make other disability advocates happy either. My reality is my reality, no matter what anyone—disabled or abled—wants it to be and no matter whose worldview it doesn't fit neatly into or whose ideology it doesn't support. My disabilities are my disabilities. I get to decide how I feel about them. And, if the funding and research get to that point, only I get to decide if I would keep or cure them.

Because there is something wrong with me. There are many, many things wrong with me. And, yes, I absolutely would still be disabled in a non-ableist society. Ableism sucks. It makes my life so much harder than it needs to be. But, in my case, it is very much my disabilities that disable me and they would continue to do so even without ableism or capitalism or whatever else. My body attacks itself. I have literal brain damage. Any regular illness knocks me flat for months. The flu once put me in the ER with a bp of 40/30. I am entirely at the mercy of changes in temperature, humidity, and barometric pressure that can KO my autonomic nervous system and give me severe joint/bone/muscle pain or subluxations, debilitating migraines, etc. My mast cells have decided that being anywhere near nightshades or any number of other products and plantstuffs activates the self-destruct button. I can't be around a huge amount of foods, scents, or any number of other things without risking death. Allergy awareness, no perfume zones, activities not centered around food, and the FDA requiring accurate labeling (they were already bad at that and then in 2020 they took supply chain issues as an excuse to allow ingredient lists to just be flat out wrong) make it easier, but I can't ban all food and scent from the human sphere (and that's a can of worms with way more issues than I have time to unpack here).

Not wanting to die because I ate something isn't internalized ableism. Not wanting to die because I ate something prepared or processed on the same surface as something else is not internalized ableism. Not wanting to die because my neighbor cooked something is not internalized ableism. More non-apartment housing options that are affordable and accessible to disabled people and insurance covering HEPA or HyperHEPA filters would be amazing, but a cross-breeze or a barbecue or a foodcart on the street or someone's bugspray or essential oil or someone eating a sandwich on the bus or at the park could still KO me. Not wanting to deal

with that is not internalized ableism, nor is not wanting to have to balance my hugely restrictive food allergies with the oftentimes mutually exclusive dietary needs and limitations of POTS, MCAS, EDS, Hypothyroidism, and the medicines I take for them, including now managing my INR. Too much Vitamin K will cancel out the blood thinners I have to take for the rest of my life and my brain might explode again, or maybe my lungs or my heart this time, who knows?

The rampant ableism on display as our society utterly fails to deal with COVID is infuriating beyond words and has made having a stroke during a plague that causes the exact same kind of stroke intensely terrifying. But, even without the ableism and even without our pathetic COVID response, not wanting to worry about having another stroke and dying or losing my ability to write or forgetting my memories or language or personality or relationships or just me is not internalized ableism. Being mad that my stroke has rendered me unable to take hormonal birth control anymore, leaving my POTS to rampage unchecked and dwindling my already limited birth control options (thanks, MCAS and EDS) at a time when getting pregnant raises my already increased risk of blood clot or stroke is not internalized ableism. I'm not going to let ableists decide for me whether or not I have kids and I'm going to do everything I can not to let my disabilities decide that for me either.

Mourning is often a bad word to use for disability, that conjures ableist parents mourning the children they think they were supposed to have, but my experiences with disability have not been without mourning. I have lost things. I've lost who I was before. I've lost hobbies I can't do anymore and aspects of my personality that have fundamentally changed and dreams and goals I've had to defer or give up on entirely. I've lost opportunities I'll never get again. I've lost fellowship I can't safely course amongst and people I don't have the energy to see, even when they make every effort to accommodate me. I've lost time. I've lost over a decade of my life focusing solely on homeostasis, immediate survival, and symptom mitigation. I've lost brain cells, stamina, muscle tone, and a functioning corporeal form. I'm afraid of losing my future and now, thanks to the ever-looming possibility of a second stroke, I'm afraid of losing my past. Those are valid feelings. Having those feelings does not mean that I, as I am now, don't deserve full human rights, agency, and autonomy. Nor does it mean I won't continue to fight ableism in all its forms and for accessibility, disability rights, healthcare, disability marriage equality, et al.


I was on a podcast recently discussing a Deus Ex Machina disability cure narrative in a sci-fi series. These kinds of narratives are inevitably fraught with complex baggage and almost always offensively and poorly done. But, as the host and I discussed, disability is not a monolith. Disabled characters are going to feel differently about the prospect and application of a cure, just as real disabled people would. But that does not mean that anyone who would cure their disability is a eugenicist, nor does treating one's illness successfully amount to trying to pass as abled, as some in disability circles have asserted. People's experiences with even the same disability will vary wildly based on symptoms, severity, comorbidities, age of onset, and any number of circumstances. And, yes, some of those circumstances will be wrapped up in ableism in its many insidious forms. But not all. I know many disabled people who, if given the option, would cure one disability and not another. I, personally, would cure all of mine because I don't want to fucking die and I'm tired of worrying about it all the time. I want to go to a potluck or a friendsgiving again. I want to not have to carefully plan every single thing I eat or drink or do with no days off ever until the end of time. I want to be able to think clearly and in the manner I'm used to functioning in my brain before the stroke. I don't know if I was neurodivergent or not before the stroke and I don't really care. I just know how I think and how my brain works and how that's been interrupted in ways that make my previous status quo, however typical or atypical it was, impossible. I want my brain to work like my brain did before. I want what's familiar, not what's statistically typical or societally optimal.

This is one of the bigger factors in how disabled people's experiences with disability can diverge. If you've always had your disability, you may not feel like you're missing anything because you're not. Before

my allergies grew more copious and severe, I didn't feel like I was missing out on anything by not being able to eat certain foods because I'd avoided them since before I can remember. They're just not food to me and, even if I could cure my allergies Star Trek style, I probably still wouldn't eat them because they're just not something I eat. But the foods I've lost in the last two decades? I miss those. The ability to be around people who may or may not have food or topical/hair products on them without risking death? Yeah, I'm missing out on a hell of a lot there. It's like an airborne pandemic of one. Given the option, I would choose to cure all of my allergies because I'm tired of life or death risk and worry fundamentally altering my relationships with food and people, cutting me off from cherished traditions, involvement in the community, human contact, or the ability to go outside (or even just stay in my apartment) safely.

If you're neurodivergent and that's how you've always been, a cure would fundamentally change who you are. For me, my disabilities, physical and cognitive, are not who I am. They make me less of who I am. They make me less able to be me. Not because I have some abled human ideal in my brain I'm not living up to, but because I don't feel like me. I can't do what I used to do. I can't think like I used to think. I can't live how I used to live or even how my other disabled and chronically ill family members live. I'd like those back. I want all of my obscure knowledge and references back and not hidden behind some thick veil of brain fog and neurofatigue I can't penetrate. I want my executive function and emotional regulation back so I can think and feel in the ways that I am used to. I want to be able to follow a conversation or a book or a TV show and remember it later. I want to write without burning out and using up all my brainpower and having to recover for days. I don't want to worry that I won't wake up again every time I go to sleep. And, while we're all going to die someday, I'd really like to see 33.

The social model is helpful for many people and many circumstances. Having a stroke has in many ways lessened certain types of ableism I face as I now am perceived by more doctors and laypeople as having a Real Disability™ instead of a nebulous dynamic disability/invisible illness they can easily fob off as psychosomatic or "self-limiting". However, overall, my life is still harder, even with the burden of ableism in many ways lessened. The social model was never meant as a singular solution for the totality of disabilitydom. There will never be one ideology, one theory, one banner, or one anything for disability. It's not a community, it's innumerable different communities in a trenchcoat and those communities, and the diversity of people within them, have many different problems, priorities, and needs, even if they overlap. There is no one disability experience, there are billions. Disability is not a monolith. It never will be. And trying to pretend it ever could be will only ever erase those who've already been erased enough by ableism and its own limited, binary view of disability. I'm tired of fighting a battle on both sides just to be seen. So just bloody see us, even if our realities don't all look the same.

It's like some of us are drowning, some of us are being waterboarded, and some of us are dying of thirst. Shouts of "Just stop with the water! We don't need it!" are coming from a valid place, but some of us absolutely do need water. Very, very badly. Some of us do need help. Some of us do need abled people to realize and recognize the hardships we face without putting a positive spin on them or avoiding language like "struggle", "challenge", "suffer from", and the like. Some of us do need and want a cure. That does not negate the realities of other disabled people for whom their only problem is indeed ableism and lack of access and who would emphatically not want a cure because, for them, a cure would be erasure (not to mention genocide). Some of us wanting a cure does not negate the rampant ableist and eugenicist ideologies out there. Once again, it boils down to choice and consent. Only we as individuals can decide what is best for our bodies and our brains and our lives (and, yes, those decisions are far easier to make in a non-ableist world). I, personally, do struggle with and suffer from my disabilities. I struggle with and suffer from ableism too. But those struggles, while overlapping, are not the same. And curing ableism would not Deus Ex Machina my disabilities away. 

Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind

Is This Just The Omen As A Theater Production?

By Ida Kao

Sometimes, you go to a theater production expecting to be told a wondrous tale of love and loss.

Sometimes, you go expecting some camp and some catchy musical numbers.


Sometimes, you go in having no idea what to expect, and end up watching someone you know rip off their shirt and get beaten with an inflatable penis that has “SOCIETY” written on it. Or watch an audience member confess their love for one of the cast members. Or watch your orientee strip naked for a dollar. (I looked away at the very end and saw zero naughty bits... the camera man also had the sense to turn the lens away in time.)

And to think I had nearly missed all of this! The performances were on December 10th and 11th, according to the poster that Alix Ziaja submitted to The Omen in Volume 55 Issue 6, and if my memory serves correctly I went to the one on the 11th after feeling a bit guilty by not staying in my mod and tackling more of my academic and extracurricular workload. I left regretting not attending the one on the 10th as well. Is it too late to publish a review four months after the last performance? Yes. Do I care? No, because this is The Omen, and Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind is too good to not discuss.

The premise of Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind (30 plays in 60 minutes) should be enough to tip anyone off that this was not a typical play. Still, I was expecting the 30 plays to be, well, plays? With plots and characters and such. I should have paid more attention to the songs that played as the audience trickled in, which included “There’s a Platypus Controlling Me” and a choral cover of “All Star.” What we got was one of the cast members explained the 60 minute time limit, the clothesline with the numbered pieces of papers with the premises of the various plays written on the back, and invited the audience to the front row if they wanted to participate more. I was in the back row, decided to stick with my choice of seat, and am still ambivalent about whether remaining there was a good choice, since participating meant being yoinked into the best kind of chaos.

Cast-members-picking-up-an-object-and-using-it-to-noisily-push-another-object-across-the-room kind of chaos. A-game-of-Simon-Says-turned-hostage-situation-turned-attempt-at-a-cast-member-shooting-himself (it was a water gun, don’t worry) kind of chaos. A-PowerPoint-presentation-on-war chaos. And when all 30 plays were done, the cast members heckled us until we left.

“Now hang on!” you might be asking. “What does this have to do with The Omen?” You also might not be asking that, but unlike Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind, there is no audience participation here. That’s certainly a crucial difference between writing in The Omen and putting on Too Much Light. Still, The Omen is segmented into unrelated parts that a reader can skip around to, and the same kind of slightly unhinged chaos with a healthy dose of meta. The Omen makes fun of Hampshire College, other papers, its readers, and itself. It’s not highbrow, it’s not cohesive, but it sure is fun.

Plus... isn’t that kind of what Hampshire College is, when things go right? Everyone doing whatever it is they want, and what do you end up with in the end? A cacophony. And Hampshire needs more of that. I know The Omen will keep publishing for the foreseeable future. Still, I hope to see more people, organizations, and structures embrace this special brand of weirdness, and I hope that Too Much Light Makes the Baby Go Blind will be returning to EDH soon. 

Omen Submission April 1

By Ella Glasgow

Is This Hyper-Sexuality, Or Hyper-Vigilance?

Tw: Sexual Content, Hypersexuality

Darting eyes scan the crowd,
Wary of becoming prey.

It is easier to use them,
Than to bare yourself to them—

To strip not clothes
But soul
And put on display
A part so private, so sensitive—

My body is such an easy distraction.
For you, for anyone!
Pretty wrappings can be exciting,
But are

Nonetheless,

Still wrappings.

Such Pretty Presents Are Meant To Be Unwrapped

Tw: Sexual Content, Hypersexuality

I giggle
in that cute, flirty way
Flick my hair over my shoulder,
Raise my chin,
Widen my doe eyes

“I don’t use makeup that way, I don’t think.”
“I don’t have anything to cover up.”

Those in the room nod, impressed
(maybe disbelieving)
And I do not mention
That I hide myself
Behind my makeup
Behind my body
Behind my push up bras and cheeky hair twirls

How could you ever notice how ugly I am inside?
The wrapping’s just

Oh

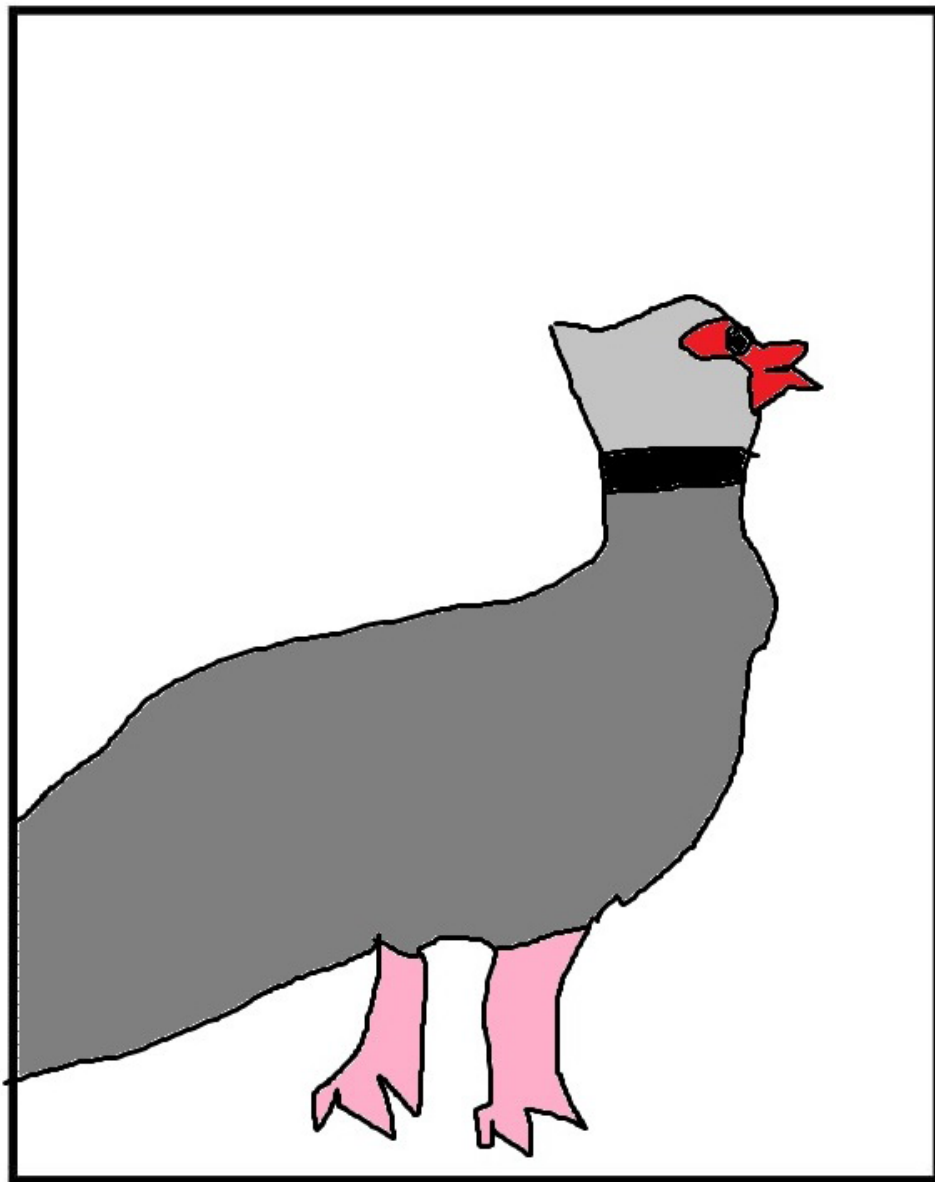
So

Pretty.

Fuck me, why don’t you?



FLIP-O-RAMA



Snow play(Poem)


By Sean Song

Note to self: Make a story about a person keeping note of the snow cover

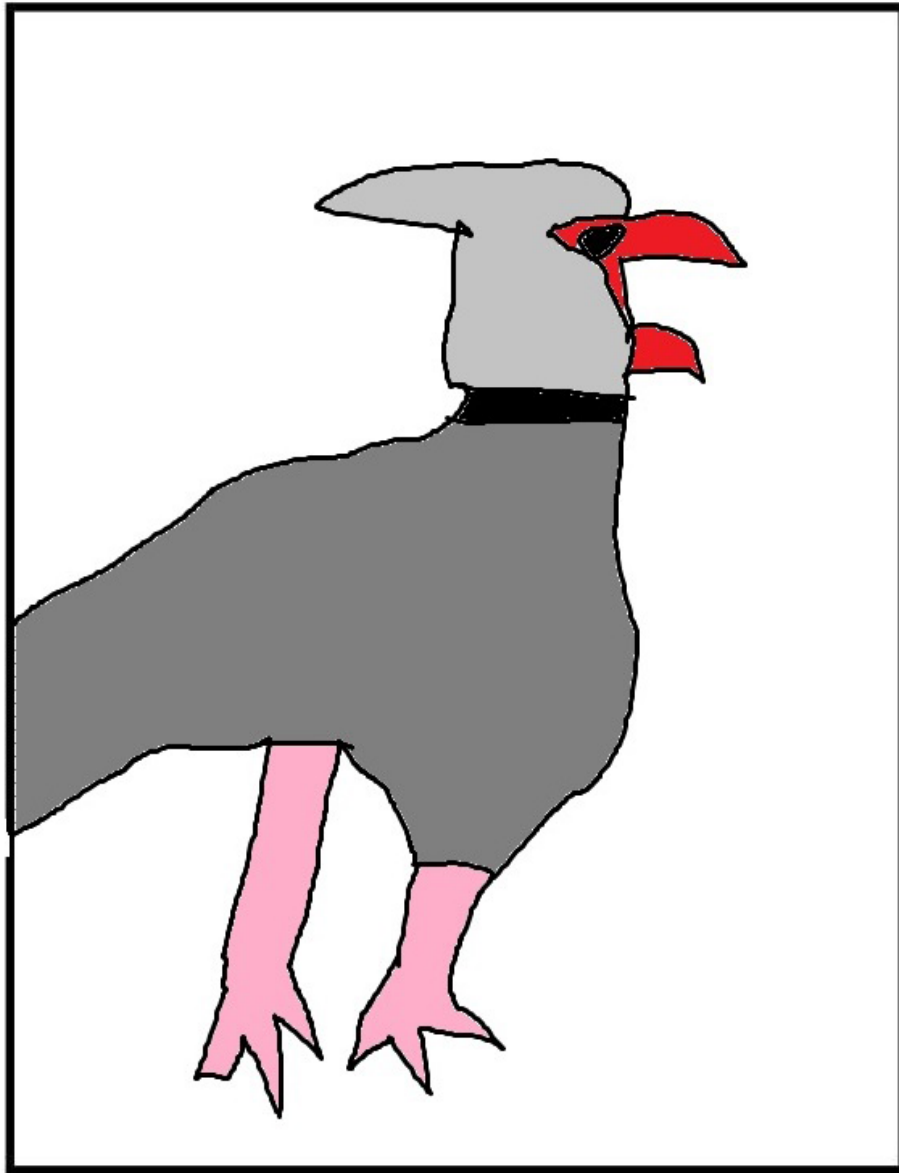
The cold faintly lick through my old window.
A few snowflakes dance faintly from my window.
Dancing and swirling till I see nothing but the afternoon glow of barely snow-covered ground.
I stare at the performance, curious about their little dance.
Swirling and fading into nothingness.
I pondered on God's wisdom from time to time.

I stared.
Stared till I was bored.
Averting my eyes from mother nature's visual dance.
She was mad.
As I see bigger and bigger snowflakes from the corner of my eye.
I turned and saw more and more snowflakes
Many of them were appalled by my ignorance and turned to show me one better.
They showered the outside.
Falling clumps of the snow from the side.
They spin and swirl with fury and rage.
They light up the world as if heaven's gate is parting and god is coming down to slap me
They spin and swirl, obscuring the background of their stage.

Spin and swirl til there stopped and took a break from their performance.
No more big clumps of snow, just like the tiny ones before.
The stage darks as if the show reached its conclusion
A patch of blue can be seen as if god was satisfied to know my acknowledgment for the act
And yet, I continue to stare.
The snowflakes danced softly down like a slow tornado.
The snowflakes cartwheels across the stage.
The snowflakes rise up breathly before tumbling back down.

And then it stopped.
It stopped as suddenly as heavy snow came.
Mother Nature seemed to be happy and left.
The sky parted and became blue.
I am puzzled but satisfy
I took a walk for the first time in a while 

FLIP-O-RAMA



SECTION LIES

Warrior Cats FANFICTION

By Arden Young. Based off of the Warriors series by Erin Hunter.

Prologue

The full moon blazed overhead in a starless sky. The pale light shown down on a cream-furred she-cat with golden patches. Her ear swiveled as the leaves of a nearby bush begun to rustle. Another she-cat, this one with a pitch black pelt, emerged from the bushes. She looked both ways, spotted the first cat, then bounded over.

The first cat lashed her tail in frustration. "You're late, Pitchstar" she spat, her green eyes glaring. "I'm sorry, Goldfur" Pitchstar replied, panting slightly. Then she added. "I'm not THAT late".

"Honestly," Goldfur continued as if she hadn't heard her latest remark, "Clan Leaders are supposed to be punctual. What kept you?"

"I ran into Pearlfeather, if you must know," the black cat responded briskly, "so I had to shake her off because you said this was to be a private meeting".

Suddenly, the bushes rustled again. Both she-cats jumped and whipped around. Pitchstar then turned to Goldfur, her neck fur bristling. "IS this a private meeting?" she demanded.

"Yes, Pitchstar," Goldfur said quickly. "Are you SURE you really shook off Pearlfeather?"

Pitchstar opened her mouth to respond, but before she could, a third cat leaped out of the bushes. Her white pelt shown in the moonlight as she padded over to the others.

"Did I miss anything?" She asked nonchalantly.

"Pearlfeather!" Pitchstar hissed angrily. "You shouldn't spy on your former clanmates!"

"Let alone former Leader and Deputy," Goldfur added with a mrow of laughter.

"This isn't funny," Pitchstar snapped.

"Well, a medicine cat's supposed to be observant," Pearlfeather said.

"FORMER medicine cat," Goldfur corrected her.

"Besides," Pearlfeather went on, "I thought I should be a part of this meeting. I can sense the danger, too."

Pitchstar stopped glaring. "Danger?" She repeated, surprised and afraid. "What danger?"

"Yes," Goldfur replied, looking pleased that Pitchstar had finally dropped her hostility. "The Clans are in trouble."

"Trouble?" Pitchstar asked, her eyes and voice full of fear. Then she snapped like a twig. "How DARE you doubt my Clan's loyalty and defenses!" She yowled, her lips drawn back in a snarl.

"That's NOT what I said," Goldfur replied calmly, "and besides, Snowclan isn't your Clan anymore. You're part of Starclan now."

Pitchstar let her neck fur lie flat again before giving her chest fur a few embarrassed licks. "Sorry," she mumbled.

“Don’t worry,” Pearlfeather said gently, resting her tail briefly on Pitchstar’s back to comfort her. “I’m sure Thornstar is doing a fine job leading Snowclan.”

“Oh PLEASE,” Pitchstar said, rolling her blue eyes. “ThornFLIGHT was a fine Deputy, but LEADER? No, she’s a TERRIBLE leader.” Then she turned to Goldfur, her eyes glazed with renewed sorrow. “Is SHE the danger? Is Thornstar destined to doom her Clan?”

“Perhaps,” Goldfur said slowly. “But perhaps not. That is for her to decide. Maybe she will surprise you, Pitchstar.”

“But,” Pearlfeather added, as if she couldn’t help herself from butting in. “Is it true that she lost a life on her way BACK from receiving them?”

“Shut up,” Goldfur said to Pearlfeather. “Pitchstar needs some reassurance!”

“In times like this, we all do,” Pearlfeather said, then, more serious, she continued. “Times are changing. A snowstorm will melt when it turns to the frost. And that’s only the beginning.” She added, looking strange.

“Poetry,” Goldfur scoffed. “How long did it take you to memorize THAT?”

“It’s not a poem!” Pearlfeather snapped. “It’s a PROPHECY! And I wrote it myself, if you must know.”

“Pitchstar looked up at the moon. She looked thoughtful, then spoke. “Yes, times ARE changing, but we can’t be the ones to change with them. Our time has passed. The fate of the Clans depends on their choices. And if they make the wrong ones, they will not survive.”



Anarchist's Guide to Monsters (book one) draft: Cole and Jake after the First Party (chapter ?)

By Casper Binnett

"Alright, well I don't want to interrupt..." Jake said, tone playful, words slightly slurred, but not terribly so. "But I think I gotta get this guy home."

"Why do you always say that like I'm your grandfather?" Cole smiled, as Jake draped a dramatic arm around his shoulder, before deciding it wasn't enough, and squeezing Cole's face close with his elbow. Cole's cheek squished against the muscle of Jake's forearm, but it didn't hide his smile.

"I am not. I'm saying I need to get you home before some gross old guy will try to hit on you!"

"That happened one time!" Cole laughed. And when Roman looked closely, his cheeks were a little red. Whether that was because Jake was proceeding to act like a school boy with a crush, or because of the beer Roman wasn't sure... Cole had said he was a lightweight, but Roman still frowned,

"I'm saving you before it happens." Jake said, bonking his head against Cole's. Roman looked at them and... they really did look like childish grade schoolers that couldn't keep their hands to themselves. Or boyfriends.

"Wow, my hero." Cole rolled his eyes as Jake finally released him. "Did that come with a white horse and suit of armor, or did you buy that separate?"

"I think the lady doth protest too much!"

"And that phrase doesn't go there," Elenore said from afar. And Roman saw just how comfortable she looked watching Jake and Cole. Her shoulders were relaxed, eyebrow quirked.

Roman tried to put a name to the feeling he was experiencing when he looked at them, but any word that felt applicable felt too strong.

It just hurt to know he couldn't even seem to start a conversation with Cole, when Cole and Jake clearly were so much more comfortable, having so much more fun. Cole looked at ease in a way Roman doesn't think he's ever seen him before. Roman usually only sees Cole in the library. When at work, hunched over notes, or reading. He usually sees Cole alone too. So seeing him and Jake both like this...

Roman kind of wants that. Not a lot. But a bit. But has a sinking feeling that any attempt on his part might ruin it. So he watched as Jake removed himself from Cole, knocked back the last of his water, and stood up.

"Goodnight!" Jake said. Cole just waved shyly at Elenore and Roman, and they left Roman staring after them as they walked side by side.

It's a cold night out, Cole's thankful Jake pestered him into bringing a coat earlier. They strolled along a quiet sidewalk past all the closed down shops.

"That was nice." Cole said after a moment. "Thanks for inviting me... it was a good idea."

"I thought so too; You know you're one of my favorite people to party with."

"You didn't even dance with me." Cole joked, faking a look of offense. "Rude."

"Look, if you want a guy to ask you to dance, maybe don't sit next to one guy that you know won't ask you the whole time?" Jake said, glancing at an unlit storefront as they passed by. "You could've just... left, you know?"

"I didn't want to leave Roman alone." Cole said. "We did kinda do this to integrate him a bit? I know you clearly forgot, but."

"I did not forget." Jake pouted. "I just... temporarily adjusted my personal values."

"And you went off to dance with Elenore." Cole glared, but he was smiling.

"Well she asked me, so if you're gonna give anyone shit for not helping Roman have a good time? Point at her!"

"Right." Cole mumbled.

He could see his breath fogging up in front of him. Thankful he wore contacts tonight, or his glasses would be fogging up. Glancing upwards he could see huge clouds hugging small parts of the open black sky, as some bright stars were emerging. The sidewalk was illuminated every couple of paces by yellow tinted street lights.

"We can't force Roman to enjoy spending time with us." Jake said suddenly. "I think he does, just not used to it. But... we can't force him to have a good time if he's not."

Cole hummed. "Yeah... maybe you're right." and he took a moment to listen to how much stronger and more confident Jake's footsteps sounded compared to his own. He glanced at his worn though green converse.

"I think he wanted to... Have a good time, I mean." Cole said then. And Jake looked at him funny.

"What?"

"I just..." Cole frowned, trying to find the words. "He just kept... looking at the dance floor. And part of me wonders if... hm. Well, I think it's more of a hypothesis..."

"I think it's more of a hypothesis." Jake mocked, pretending to push up fake glasses. "Just say a guess, fuckin' nerd."

"I think maybe... Roman likes to dance."

Cole squinted at Jake in the darkness between street lamps. Just to get a good look at his reaction. Jake just raised his eyebrows slightly. "Really... you think so?"

"I mean. I can't say for sure but... he just. Keep looking over, you know?" Cole said. "And... I was... kind of hoping he'd ask me. Or even just go do it himself, but he didn't. Just sat with me and drank and didn't know what to say."

"Why didn't you ask him?"

"You know how I get with guys!" Cole spluttered. "Look, there's a reason I like confident men. They do all that for me!"

"You're a coward."

"Oh, says you."

"I can both be one, and see one." Jake pointed out. "But I can ask girls to dance. I can ask girls to spend the night, too."

"Yeah but as like. A last resort." Cole pointed out. "And you're never as happy about it after."

"I mean. True." Jake said. "But asking him would've been better than just awkwardly sitting there all night, wondering if he would. If he did want to dance, he probably would've said yes, you know?"

"I don't know." Cole mumbled. "It was fine."

"Doesn't sound like it."

"Well it was, okay?"

"Fine. Be that way." Jake said, shoulders rolling back a moment.

Cole huffed indignantly and could see it in the air.

"You know, I'm kind of surprised that you didn't ask me to find another place to stay the night."

"What do you mean?"

"There was a girl talking to you, wasn't there? Short, brunette, leather gloves? I saw her chatting you up. Looks like your type."

"So?"

"So, why didn't you take her home?"

Jake suddenly got quiet. His mouth pulled into a tight frown as he glanced at the sidewalk.

“Well... You don’t really have a different place to crash right now, now that Lucas is gone? I didn’t want to do that to you.”

Cole blinked at him.

“I could’ve easily stayed with Elenore or Roman.”

Jake shrugged. “Oh yeah. Guess you could’ve.”

Cole grumbled something to himself, before saying “You know, you are literally one of the worst liars I’ve ever met.”

“Am not.”

“Are too!”

Jake just huffed as they both slowed to a stop at a crosswalk. And Cole gave him a moment to say something. When it became evident that Jake wasn’t going to continue the conversation, Cole did.

“Was there something wrong with her?” He asked.

“...No.” Jake said. “She seemed cool. Really nice I just... I don’t know.”

“You said so yourself, we can’t force Roman to have fun if he doesn’t want to. Was that what you were worried about?”

“No...” Jake said. “I just didn’t feel like it, you know?”

“You didn’t... feel like it?”

Jake sighed, and it was a little too heavy to be nothing. “I just... the past few times I’ve done it... haven’t been as great, you know?”

“Not really.” Cole said. “But I think I can maybe imagine?”

“I... Hm... It’s...” Jake was clearly reaching for the right words, but it was slowed down by the alcohol. It took a moment, Cole watched him puff a cloud of air into the cold night and shrug a little deeper into his jacket, as if to hide from the cold, before he finally settled on a very tart:

“It just doesn’t feel fun anymore.”

Cole paused. Took a moment to really study Jake’s expression. But it proved fruitless as jhe just wore a fake look of indifference to the situation at hand and his words about it.

“It’s... because of Elenore, isn’t it?” Cole asked quietly.

Jake deflated. And now he was wearing an expression of defeat. “I don’t know...” He said. “Well... I do know. It’s just confusing.”

“Why would it be confusing?” Cole asked. The crosswalk light turned, but neither of them moved. “It makes sense to me.”

“It’s confusing because it’s never happened before.” Jake’s voice is parched, harsh, and frustrated. “Like... never.”

“You’ve really never been hung up on a girl? Doesn’t seem right.”

“Well... I just... I’m just used to like. Being friends or... even just meeting and then we have sex and that’s when I decide if I like her.”

“Uh huh.”

“But... I didn’t meet Elenore like that.” Jake said. “I met Elenore through one of my classes. And... we did a partner project... and I invited her to coffee to work on it, and she just... didn’t let me do my thing.”

“What thing?”

“I don’t know. Flirt?”

“You like her because she didn’t let you flirt?”

“No- I mean. I flirt with her now all the time. You’ve seen us. And she does it back, but now it’s just all... friend stuff I think. Or at least. She thinks.”

“Yeah...”

“Just. When I first met her, she like... Threw me off my rhythm. I don’t know how to describe it. She

bought her own coffee, without asking if one of us could pay for both, she was headstrong and confident..."

"Yeah, you like that in women."

"I sure do!" Jake said, like it was something to be proud of. "What of it?"

"Nothing, nothing." Cole said.

"I became friends with her, before I got to act like I usually do. Which... probably helps lead to a more... deep friendship but kinda sinks any ships in terms of her expectations being romantic."

"And you liked her right away." Cole said.

"Yeah! Well. I did, but I was also like. I was more eager to be her friend at first than anything. But now that I have that, I want... more."

"Right."

"So... I guess... Usually I just. Kinda like a girl, shoot my shot, and we break up because we don't have a lot in common."

"Yeah I know, I live with you." Cole rolled his eyes, as Jake finally deemed it okay for them to start heading down the crosswalk. It was nice to get moving, because standing around the cold was just creeping in on them.

"But with Elenore... I know we have a lot in common." Jake said. "I know we could like... make it work. And be together for a long time."

"...right."

"And like... for some reason, the more I wait? The more I hold out without telling her? It's like... I like her more. I just keep liking her more and more and I'm not sure what I'm going to do with myself if this keeps going much longer."

"So what you're trying to say is... you actually have the chance to have a crush on her, and that's not something you're used to?"

"Yeah. Like I have to live with it now, and that like..." Jake trailed off. "You know... it uh..." he started snapping his fingers. "...Kinda sucks."

"Eloquent."

"Shut up."

Cole chuckled, but it didn't carry.

"So... why haven't you?" Cole asked after a while. And it certainly sounded less judgemental than his previous comments.

"Why haven't I what?" But Jake was looking away, and Cole could hear the pinch in his voice.

"Why haven't you asked her out yet? If it's just getting harder and harder to live with and keep to yourself?"

Jake sniffed, and shoved his hands in his pockets, but that didn't stop Cole from seeing that they were bunched up.

"Because."

"Because?"

Jake growled. He sounded pent up, like he was enduring something terrible when really, it was feelings for a girl, get over it.

"Because now it matters." Jake said, and his voice dripped with a certain rawness that Cole hasn't heard in his voice in a long time. Maybe ever.

So Cole didn't respond. Just kept walking. When he listened to Jake's footsteps they didn't land as hard as they had before. Cole's were louder. More confident.

"I'm terrible when it matters." Jake said.

And Cole felt that.

So he just hummed in agreement, and looked at the black night sky, still yet to fully emerge. 

teeth?

